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INSIDE THE BELTWAY



William Casey

Casey strikes again

5 Central Intelligence Agency director William Casey has personally warned two leading New York publishers that books about the CIA, being written for them by two investigative reporters, may violate U.S. law. The warnings went to Random House, which in late August is publishing Seymour Hersh's book on the Soviet downing of a South Korean airliner in 1983, and to Simon and Schuster, which has contracted Bob Woodward to write a book on the CIA.

5 Random House chairman Robert Bernstein and other Random House officials quoted Mr. Casey as saying their book might contain information that violates the law and that it is his duty to uphold the law, referring to a seldom-used

1950 statute barring the disclosure of certain intelligence information.

In his telephone call to Mr. Bernstein yesterday, Mr. Casey also said that he was having a recent book on the downing of Korean Air Lines Flight 007, called "Shootdown," by British author R.W. Johnson, checked to see if it violates the law. The law, known as COMINT, makes it illegal for anyone to disclose classified information about U.S. ciphers, code-breaking or other communications intelligence. It has never been invoked against publications.

According to Random's chief lawyer, Gerald Hollingsworth, "Casey said he has talked to a lot of reporters, who told him Sy Hersh had the whole works on everything the CIA has in the Far East."

— John Elvin